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SUBJECT: AMB RICE DISCUSSES WOMEN'S ISSUES WITH STEPHEN LEWIS

REF: A. USUN 418, B. 2008 USUN 822

¶1. (SBU) Former Canadian ambassador Stephen Lewis spoke to Ambassador Rice April 27 on the need for a new UN agency on women's affairs, and to plead for U.S. support to move quickly to establish the new agency. Lewis, through his previous positions as Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Canadian ambassador to the UN, and Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, is familiar with the inner workings of the UN.

¶2. (SBU) Lewis envisages a composite entity similar to UNICEF but with a component that would be bureaucratically part of the UN Secretariat. He hopes the entity would eventually have a voluntarily-funded budget of between \$500 million to \$1 billion, have universal reach, and work on issues of poverty, political participation, sexual exploitation and trafficking, HIV/AIDS, inheritance rights, land ownership and other discriminatory legislation. He noted that \$500 million would be less than one-third of UNICEF's annual budget. The current amount allocated to the combination of gender offices now totals approximately \$150 million.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Rice asked about synergies with other parts of the UN system. Lewis responded that UNICEF views women only in their roles as mothers, UNFPA mainly focuses on reproductive health, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has normative responsibilities. He sees the new women's agency as complementing all these offices, as well as the Commission on the Status of Women. Ambassador Rice noted that the new agency must function in developed countries, as well as in developing ones, to promote gender equality.

¶4. (SBU) Moving to his NGO's recent work in Africa, Lewis reported that 50-60 Zimbabwean women had been raped as punishment for their activism with the political opposition. These women had provided affidavits to be used as evidence of politically-motivated rape in future legal action. Regarding the upcoming Security Council trip to DRC, Lewis advocated that the mission visit Bukavu, in particular Dr. Mukwege at the Panzi Hospital.

Rice